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A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

SOCIETIES

FOR THE

Reformation of MANNERS,

AT

SALTERS-HALL,

On *Monday* JULY the 2d, 1716.

By JEREMIAH HUNT.

LONDON:

Printed for J. PHILLIPS, and Sold by *J. Roberts* at the *Oxford-Arms* in *Warwick-Lane*, and *J. Harrison* the Corner of the *Royal Exchange*. 1716.

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On Monday June the 3d, 1706.

By JEREMIAH HUNT.

LONDON:

Printed for J. PHILLIPS, and Sold by T. Edlin at the Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane, and T. Atwood the Corner of the Royal Exchange, 1706.

TO

John Barrington-Shute, *Esq*;

SIR,

AS *soon as I was prevail'd with to suffer this Sermon to appear abroad, I determin'd to do my self the Honour of addressing You.*

The Influence which Religion and Virtue have upon the Happiness of Mankind, in a Private *and in a* Social *Character, is a considerable Part of the Argument this Discourse treats upon: And the large Share of Happiness, which by these Principles and Measures of Conduct you constantly impart, at once gives Strength and Evidence to its Truth, and makes appear to all that have the Satisfaction of being acquainted with you, the Fitness of my Choice.*

As to the Performance which I humbly offer to your candid Judgment, if it bears but a good Proportion to the Dignity and Usefulness of its Subject, I cannot doubt but it will receive from You a kind Entertainment: And it is no more agreeable to my own Inclination,

than Your Conſtant and unbiaſs'd Affection to Truth, that any Favour ſhou'd be expreſs'd to it barely for the Author's Sake.

I know it is a Principle generally receiv'd, that Writers are fond of their own Performances. I can ſincerely ſay, that unleſs this Production does bear a Reſemblance of Truth, I deſire no kind Regard to be expreſs'd to it: But if it does, tho' it may want that Strength and Beauty which a more Maſterly Hand might have given it, I cannot but conceive Hopes (how inſenſibly do I ſlide into a little Affection to it?) that You, Sir, will take it under Your favourable Patronage.

It is however no little Satisfaction to me, that this gives me the Opportunity of aſſuring You, that with the greateſt Reſpect I am,

SIR,

Your moſt Humble, and

Moſt Obedient Servant,

JER. HUNT.

DEUT. XXXii. 29.

O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter End!

THE Words that I have read, are part of the excellent Song that *Moſes*, the wiſe Lawgiver of the *Jews*, approaching near his End, deliver'd to the Children of *Iſrael*. In the 1ſt Verſe, having call'd Angels and Men to bear witneſs, or by an elegant Figure of Speech, the Heavens and the Earth, which ſhould remain and continue after him ſhortly to be remov'd from them, and be the Inſtruments that God would uſe to expreſs his Reſentments, if they diſobey'd his Laws, in order to awaken more effectually their Attention, in the 2d Verſe offers up a Prayer: *Let my doctrine* (for ſo the Words may be render'd) *drop as the rain, and my ſpeech diſtill as the dew, as the ſhower upon the herbs, and as the great rain upon the graſs*; and in the 3d Verſe declares the Argument of his Song, *I will publiſh the Name of the Lord: aſcribe ye greatneſs to our God.*

The Preface being finiſh'd, the Song begins Verſe the 4th; *He is the Rock*, the firſt Principle and Cauſe of all things; *his work is per-*

perfect, no Flaw, or Defect therein. *And God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good.* And his Providence is alike compleat; *For all his ways are judgment, a God of Truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.* In the 5th Verse he makes an Appeal to them: Did he, *viz.* God, do any hurt to him, *i. e. Israel?* No; his Children are their Blot; and all the Evil that befals them, is the Fruit of their Impiety and Wickedness. (For to this rendering the Original Text does * lead.) In the 6th Verse he does expostulate with them: *Do ye so reward the Lord, O foolish People, and unwise? Is not he thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?*

Gen. 1. 31.

* *Vide* Patrick's Comment.

In the following Part of the Song, from the 7th to the 15th, *Moses*, recommending to them the calling to their Minds, the Favours, God, in his kind Providence had conferr'd upon them, by the Aid of those amongst them, that were the most advanced in Years; recounts in a most elegant Style, and with beautiful Metaphors, the many and distinguishing Blessings, God had indulg'd to them. *Remember the Days of old*, &c. Run far backwards into Ages past, and you will find the Divine Affection to you, to have an early Date. When he parcell'd out the Earth, as the rightful Sovereign of it, to the Children of Men, You came into his kind Thoughts; and were his Portion, and the Lot of his Inheritance. In a wild and frightful Desart he chose You to be his People, instructed and led You on, and guarded You with a Care equal to that, which is express'd to the Apple of the Eye. The Eagles, that are fam'd for

for a tender Concern for their Young, to inſtruct and ſupport them for their Flight, are a lively Image of God's Care and Regard to You; for whom he has likewiſe made the moſt rich and ample Proviſion.

From the 15th Verſe to the 19h, he gives a melancholy Deſcription of the ungrateful Returns, the *Iſraelites* made to God their great Benefactor, and the heinous Sins they were guilty of. But *Jeſhurun waxed fat and kicked*; growing wanton, like the thoughtleſs Herd, fed high and pamper'd: They, forſaking the God that made them, minted new Gods, and offer'd their Sacrifices to them, Gods, whoſe Beginnings were eaſily trac'd; unknown to, as well as unfear'd by, their Pious Fathers.

From the 19th Verſe to the 28th, He, by a Prophetick Spirit opens a diſmal Scene; a Scene ſo full of Horror, as by an attentive View, is ſufficient to excite Dread in Minds the moſt ſtupid: *And the Lord ſaw it and was angry, and ſaid, a Fire is kindled in my Wrath, and ſhall burn to the loweſt Hell. I will heap Miſchiefs upon them, I will ſpend my Arrows upon them*, &c. Ver. 28. *For they are a Nation void of Counſel, neither is there any Underſtanding in them.* And in the Words I have read like a Governor, who is as well kind as wiſe, he expreſſes his warm and ardent Wiſh; *Oh that they were wiſe, that they would underſtand this, that they would conſider their latter End!* In diſcourſing upon them I ſhall

I. Endeavour to give you the true Senſe, and Meaning of them.

II. Make

II. Make an Application ſuitable, and proper to our preſent Occaſion.

I. To give you the true Senſe, and Meaning of the Words, *Oh! that they were wiſe!*

The Character of *Wiſdom* lies in diſcerning clearly, wherein our true Intereſt and Happineſs, and the true Intereſt and Happineſs of others, does conſiſt, and in a conſtant and reſolute Proſecution of it. The wiſe Man, finding in himſelf a ſtrong Inclination to be happy, apprehends this to be a Principle plac'd in his Nature by the Author of it, with a deſign to puſh him on to a vigorous purſuit after it. And ſince his Maker has endued him with a Power to ſee how far the various Beings, that ſurround him, influence to his Happineſs or Miſery; he is reſolv'd, in the beſt manner he can, to make uſe of it for this Purpoſe. And thus ſetting out, he calmly conſiders his own Make; that he has Thought that gives him the Pleaſure or Pain that appears to be diſtinct from what ariſes from the Body. He takes into his View the Compaſs and Extent of Happineſs he is capable of enjoying, and fails not of giving due Weight to what is future. The Concern of Happineſs to him appears to be too near and touching to be purſu'd in haſte, and with Precipitancy. He is therefore with Reaſon timorous of being miſled by falſe Lights. And ſince he is ſenſible that he receiv'd his Being from God, he carefully attends to the Views, which Divine Being by Reaſon or Revelation has open'd to him to direct him in his Deſign.

Aſſiſted

Aſſiſted by theſe Methods, he is ſo far from leaving God, who created him, out of his Thoughts in the purſuit of Happineſs, that he is convinc'd to be well with him, whoſe Power and Goodneſs are unlimited, is the beſt and moſt neceſſary Way both to gain and ſecure it. And when other Beings that are around him, make their Court to render him happy, he is careful to view them on all Sides, to weigh conſiderately the Degree of Pleaſure or Intereſt (which are other Words to expreſs Happineſs by) that they are fitted to impart; and if they are capable of giving him a Satisfaction of a little Nature and a ſhort Continuance, and at the ſame time hurt him in a greater and a more important Intereſt, and make him run the Riſque of a long and laſting Miſery, he reſolutely with Indignation diſcards and rejects them. In a word, the Moment of Things, as referring to his Happineſs, or the contrary, is attentively regarded by him, and the Ballance determines his Conduct. Led by theſe Principles, he comes to know at once wherein his own Happineſs, and the Happineſs of others, does really conſiſt, and accordingly governs himſelf.

The contrary to this, enters into the Character of a *weak* Perſon.

He is one that does not regard the Mind, or take in the peculiar Satisfaction or Uneaſineſs, which *that* is capable of feeling, to the Scheme of Happineſs he forms to himſelf. He is ſo far from conſidering the Extent of Happineſs he is capable of, that he is deſirous of no other, than what is within the narrow Limits of Time and Body. And

the Things that are at a diſtance, and remote from him, (tho' the Frame of Cauſes and Effects that the wiſe God has ſettled muſt firſt ceaſe or be varied before their actual Being can be prevented) in proportion leſſen in his Account, and have but little Weight with him. He is ſo diſinclin'd to attend to the Advantages God by Reaſon and Revelation has afforded him in the purſuit of Happineſs, that he takes up with any falſe Light. Tho' he lives and moves, and has his Being in God, he is ſo weak as to leave him entirely out of his Thoughts, unleſs ſome ſad Incident of his Life forces the unwelcome Thought upon him. He is ſo far from weighing the Moment of other Objects as they ſtand related to his Happineſs in different Proportions, with cool and deliberate Reflection, that he is in pain till he gratifies a preſent Inclination whatever are the Conſequences of it. He willingly lets go the Good that is not ſenſible, tho' of the higheſt Importance, and capable of giving the greateſt Delight in the Review, for a preſent deluſive Satisfaction, that in the Reflection occaſions to the Mind Uneaſineſs and Chagrin. The Pourtraiture might be drawn to a greater Length, but it turns ſo much to the Reproach and Diſgrace of Reaſonable Nature, that I muſt take off my Hand from a Task ſo ungrateful. A ſlight Review of which, I muſt own, excites in me ſtrong and ardent Deſires, that there might be no *Originals*, from whence ſuch Draughts might be taken; or in the Words that *Moſes* uſes in regard to the Children of *Iſrael*:

Iſrael: Oh that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, (or as it may be tranſlated) *then they would underſtand this*; that is, then they would perceive and take in, what I, as the Miniſter of God, have faithfully deliver'd to them, of the Way of Life and Death, and the Method that God is reſolved to take in the Courſe of his Providence towards them, according to their Deportment and Behaviour; then they would lay to heart, and *conſider their latter End.*

By *latter End,* we may apprehend *Moſes* to intend the Ruin that ſhould inevitably befall the Nation of the *Jews* on the account of the Offences he had in the Context made mention of, if Repentance and Reformation did not happily prevent. And from this Interpretation we are naturally led to conſider the Conſequences which attend the different Courſes that Men ingage in.

The two Paths that Mankind take, are either of Virtue or Vice; and each is accompanied with its proper Effects, tho' of a different Nature, the one of Happineſs, the other of Miſery, and under the different Views of *Natural* and *Moral* Influence.

I. The Practice of Piety and Virtue has a *Natural* Tendency to render Perſons and Societies perfect and happy, and a Courſe of Irreligion and Vice the contrary.

1. The Courſe of Virtue or Vice *naturally* influences to the Happineſs or Miſery of Perſons in a *Private* Character.

A Regard to God, and what holds of Him, a Concern to perform Juſtice in the Truth of the Words we uſe, and in the Fidelity of performing our Promiſes, and in the maintaining in our conſtant Conduct all the Rights that human Nature may lay claim to, whether natural or acquir'd, whether referring to the Mind, the Liberty of thinking for Ourſelves; or to the Body, the guarding againſt offering the leaſt Injury to any of its Members; or to the Reputation, the taking Care not to ſully the Character of others; or to the Eſtate, poſſeſs'd by rightful Deſcent, or gain'd by particular honeſt Application; in not leſſening either by Violence or Fraud: a Care in the Temper of the Mind and the Actions of the Life, to expreſs Goodneſs in all the various Inſtances of Humanity, Compaſſion, Advice and Succour, are the Virtues that give to the Underſtanding Clearneſs and Compaſs of Thought, and to the reflecting Power, Peace and Serenity; which procure Favour with God and Men, and render the Reputation clear and unſtain'd, and ſerve every Intereſt that we can have in our View. The due Regulation of the Appetites and the Paſſions that are planted in our Natures, without which the foremention'd Offices cannot be perform'd, by Temperance, Purity, Moderation, and Humility, imparts a Correctneſs of Judgment, a true and a noble Liberty, a Vigour of Mind, and a Strength of Conſtitution, attended with a pleaſing Activity.

The Reverſe of all this is the natural Reſult of an Irreligious and Vicious Courſe of Life. Unreigned Appetites, and ungovern'd Paſſions,

Paſſions, breaking forth into Luxury and Exceſs, Defilement and Impurity, Pride and Inſolence, immoderate Affection to, and irregular Purſuit after the Riches of this World; darken the Underſtanding, and cloud the Judgment, by the Steams and Miſts that naturally ariſe and ſpring up from thence; diſturb the Peace of the Mind, enſlave the Perſon, blacken the Character, and at once weaken the Conſtitution of the Body, and impair the Reſolution of the Mind, and diſpoſe to Acts of Injuſtice and Cruelty, which muſt ſet God and Men at Variance with us, and ſo on all Accounts render us unhappy.

2. That a Courſe of Religion and Virtue, or of Irreligion and Vice, *naturally* tends to render *Societies* happy or miſerable, may eaſily be made to appear.

Perſons that are adorn'd with all the Virtues I have before deſcrib'd, by their Principles and their Temper, their Clearneſs of Thought and Solidity of Judgment, their Vigour of Mind and Firmneſs of Conſtitution, are qualify'd either for the deſigning or executing well the Offices of a Social State. Their Love and Practice of Juſtice and Goodneſs in all the various Ways which both ought to be expreſs'd, not only prevent the infringing the Publick Peace and Tranquillity, but alſo render them agreeable and uſeful Members of the Communities to which they relate, and real Bleſſings to them. The Self-Government that ſuch are Maſters of, ſecures the Society from turbulent Commotions and reſtleſs Tumults, that are ever unhappy,

happy, and ſometimes fatal to a State; renders the Management of Affairs, by thoſe that are at the Head of them, eaſie and delightful. Oh what pleaſing Tranſport does the Mind feel by ſuppoſing in Idea the Perfection of Religion and Virtue in a Society!

On the contrary, how diſagreeable is the Scene that the Conſideration of the unhappy Influence that Irreligion and Vice has upon a Community, opens to the Mind!

Thoſe that are to govern, if hereby they loſe not the Diſcernment of the true End of Governing, *viz.* the Happineſs of the Subjects, will want however the Inclination with Conſtancy and Steadineſs to act conformably to it. The Reſolves of Council in the weighty Affairs of State, if jarring Diſcord does not riſe up and diſturb them (of which there is thro' Vice too great a Hazard) are for the ſame Reaſon form'd rather from Luſts of Intereſt and Ambition, than a Regard to the Publick Good; and the Execution, which is the Life of them, on the ſame Account, is ſlow and irregular: For which Reaſon, as well as on the account of the headſtrong and unruly Paſſions Vice gives the Populace, Obedience to the Laws is render'd difficult, and all the Cements of Communities become weak and diſſolv'd. In a Word, the whole Body Politick in all its Parts begins to ſicken, grows feeble, and at laſt is expos'd an eaſie Prey to Foreign Power.

Theſe are the Effects that Virtue and Vice are *naturally* attended with to *Perſons* and *Societies*. Beſides which,

II. There

II. There is a *Moral* Influence. By which Expreſſion I wou'd be underſtood to mean, the Difference the Divine Being makes, when He ſees it fit, between the Virtuous and the Vicious, whether Perſons or Societies, by the Interpoſition of his Providence.

By the ſame Way that we arrive to the Knowledge of a Being that is the Firſt Cauſe of all other Beings, and conſequently the Sovereign; of Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs unlimited, every where preſent and uncircumſcrib'd: By the ſame Way, I ſay, we gain a conſiderable Proof that he does intereſt himſelf in, and is concern'd about the Direction and Management of Men and their Affairs. And this is render'd more clear and certain by the Doctrine of Reveal'd Religion.

That a Religious and a Virtuous Courſe of Life, which is ſo agreeable to the Nature of God, who is pure and holy, righteous and good, muſt procure his Favour and Friendſhip; and on the contrary, that a Courſe of Irreligion and Vice, which is ſo diſagreeable to the Excellency and Moral Perfections of his Nature, his Diſpleaſure and Reſentment; is too evident to need a labour'd Proof. It is true indeed, he does not think it proper and agreeable to Wiſdom, in a State of Trial, to give in all particular Caſes Marks of a ſenſible Diſtinction, having done ſo much by the Conſequences of Actions to ſecure Virtue and deter from Vice. And yet I am perſuaded, that

that the Inſtances of this Kind are more numerous than come within the Compaſs of our Knowledge, or than the Charity the Chriſtian Religion recommends, will allow us to determine; the Perſons themſelves being the beſt, if not only capable of judging.

The Caſe of *Societies*, in my Opinion, is ſomewhat different. For Communities, as ſuch, not being capable of Rewards or Puniſhments in another World, muſt by the Divine Governor, according to the Prevalence of the Virtues or Vices of a Social State, be dealt with and treated in this. The Hiſtory of the *Jewiſh* Nation, tranſmitted to us in the Sacred Writings, is a full Evidence of this Truth. How flouriſhing and proſperous in a ſtate of Peace was that People? And when War ſprung up, and Enemies invaded them, how wonderfully were they directed, ſpirited and ſucceeded, while they were ſincere in their Regards to the true and the living God, and faithfully obſerv'd the Laws he had favour'd them with? How ſtrangely did the Face of Affairs vary when they revolted from their God, and acted contrary to his Statutes? How ſurprizingly unlike their former ſelves did they appear, being in an amazing Manner intimidated, and becoming thereby the eaſie Triumph of their inſulting Foes? This is livelily deſcrib'd by *Moſes* in the Verſes that follow our Text, 30, 31. which plainly evince, that he had a Reference in the Words we are explaining to a Moral Influence. How elſe ſhou'd *One chace a Thouſand*, and *Two put Ten Thouſand*

Thouſand to Flight? "Whence ſhou'd ſuch an amazing Alteration proceed, that the *Iſraelites* who formerly with an handful of Men put vaſt Armies to Flight, ſhou'd now, tho' never ſo numerous, be beaten by a very few. *Except their Rock had ſold them*; a little Conſideration was ſufficient to make them underſtand that this had been impoſſible, if they had not forſaken their God, who thereupon deliver'd them up to the Will of their Enemies. For by their *Rock* is meant *God*, and his *ſelling them*, is his *quitting his Intereſt in them*, and giving them up to thoſe that hated them. *And the Lord had ſhut them up*, ſo that they cou'd not eſcape the Hands of their Enemies. *For their Rock is not as our Rock, our Enemies themſelves being Judges.* Lev. 26. 8, 17, 36, 37. v. 31.

To the Hiſtory of the *Jews* might be added, for a farther Proof of the preſent Argument, the Accounts that other Hiſtorians give, as well of the ſurpriſing Decay and Ruine, as the remarkable Riſe and Growth of Kingdoms and States. And I had ſome Thoughts of giving you a Sketch hereof, but the Argument is both too noble and too large to be brought within ſuch narrow Limits: And the Story of the *Jewiſh* Nation is ſufficient to remove from a conſiderate Perſon, any Doubt that he might have of the Moral Influence that a Religious and Virtuous Courſe of Life has upon the Happineſs of a Society, and the contrary on the Diſtreſs and Deſolation of it. The Time when, and the Manner how, and the Circumſtances attending the Exer-

ciſe of it muſt be left to the wiſe Determination of that God, who is not pleaſed with the Diſtreſſes of any Communities of Men, for their own ſake; but is greatly delighted with their true Proſperity and Welfare, and joins in with the Wiſh of *Moſes*, in a Way becoming the abſolute Perfection of his Nature. O that Men were wiſe! then they wou'd underſtand, then they wou'd conſider their latter End; that is, the Conſequences of their Actions under the different Views of *Natural* and *Moral* Influence.

Having thus explain'd the Words, I proceed,

II. To make ſuch an Application of them as is ſuitable and proper to the preſent Occaſion.

1. We may remark from what has been ſaid, the *kind* Methods that God takes in the Government he exerciſes over Men in their Fallen State.

He not only ſets the Rule he would have them regulate their Conduct by in a clear Light, and gives them the View of Future Rewards and Puniſhments to influence them; but orders Affairs ſo, as a Train of good and evil Effects ſhould ſpring up from the different Courſes of Virtue or Vice they ſhall engage in; and thoſe Effects ſhall not only affect themſelves, but the Societies to which they belong.

The Rewards and Puniſhments of another World are at a diſtance and out of ſight, and

and ſo in proportion the Strength of their Influence is abated: It is difficult for many who are ſunk into Senſe, to raiſe their Minds to any attentive Regard to them; whereas the Things of Senſe lie near, and the Addreſs they make is ſtrong and inſinuating, and the frequent Return makes the Impreſſion deep. God in his infinite Goodneſs has contrived Matters ſo skilfully, that Men ſhall not ſtay till they come into the other State to know the different Effects of Virtue and Vice; they ſhall even feel in this what may awaken them to attend to the next. And I muſt confeſs I am a little apprehenſive, that were it not for the natural Fruits of Mens Actions in this Life, the unſeen Rewards and Puniſhments of another would influence but a very few. We ſee Crouds of Men, who are call'd Reaſonable, by the Strength and Unrulineſs of their Paſſions, breaking through all the Enforcements our kind Governor has made uſe of to recommend Virtue by. And what would they do, if theſe preſent Reſtraints were remov'd? I don't ſay but Future Rewards and Puniſhments, duly conſider'd and attentively view'd, carry a mighty Force along with them; but ſuch is the unhappy State of Human Nature deprav'd and corrupt, that Men ſtand in need of ſomething preſent, and at hand, to bring them to attend. And what can more effectually do this, than to make Vice produce Pain of Mind, Diſorder of Body, Stain of Character, and Embarraſſment of Circumſtances? Hereby the Mind is alarm'd and excited to reflect, and I am

inclin'd to think there is no Perſon but has this Way been improv'd to Wiſdom of Conduct in ſome reſpect or other. It is true indeed, he is happy who foreſees Evil in the Cauſe, and prevents it, and is wiſe at no great Expence of his own. But I fear there are but very few in Compariſon of this Character.

And as making Evil to ariſe naturally from a vicious Courſe, is an Inſtance of the wiſe and kind Government that God exerciſes over Men, ſo the happy Fruits that proceed from a virtuous Courſe, equally evince his Wiſdom and Goodneſs to us. Hereby the Mind is led to ſee, it is worth while, with the greateſt Firmneſs of Reſolution to ſtem the Tide that runs againſt Religion and Virtue, how impetuous ſoever it may be. Hereby we are animated to preſs on, till we gain that Degree of Religion and Virtue, that makes both pleaſant and delightful to us, and then we become as happy to ourſelves, and as beneficial to others, as this our preſent State will admit of.

2. From what has been offer'd we may take notice, that the Religious and the Virtuous alone are the truly *wiſe* Perſons. *Solomon* when he deſcribes the wiſe Man, tells us, *his Eyes are in his Head, whereas the Fool walketh in Darkneſs*; and *if thou be wiſe thou ſhalt be wiſe for thy ſelf.* And in the 19th Chapter, *v.* 20. he gives Advice, *Hear Counſel, and receive Inſtruction that thou mayſt be wiſe in thy latter End.* If it be a Mark of Wiſdom to regard our true Happineſs, to expreſs a due

Eccleſ. 2. 14.
Prov. 9. 12.

due Care in the purſuit of it, and to have the End and the Concluſion of the Whole attended to, then the Religious and the Virtuous alone may lay claim to it.

There is no Perſon who has not laid aſide Thought but will readily own, that to have Peace with God, who as our Maker has an eaſie Acceſs to our Minds, and can give them Self-Enjoyment, or Diſquietude, as he ſees moſt proper to the Exerciſe of his Government; to have Calmneſs and Tranquillity in our own Conſciences, and the pleaſing Satisfaction of an Agreement and Harmony between our Reaſon, and the Principles it receives, and the Courſe and Conduct of our Actions, which conſtitutes the trueſt Liberty; to have a Contexture of Body tolerably fitted for Action in a Social State, and a Reputation (at leaſt amongſt the Perſons whoſe Character is the moſt to be eſteem'd) clear and unſtain'd, to render our Activity in it the more ſerviceable and beneficial; to have by the Exerciſe of Juſtice and Goodneſs, the Delight that ſprings up from a Conſciouſneſs of doing what is becoming us, and the Love, and Affection, and Friendſhip of thoſe that we converſe with; are the greateſt and moſt eſſential Ingredients, that enter into true Happineſs.

Now ſince it is the Character of a Perſon truely wiſe to know and purſue his real Happineſs, and theſe Ingredients of it which we have before repreſented, ariſe in the Courſe of Things from Religion and Virtue; then it undeniably follows, that the Religious and the Virtuous are the Perſons alone who

who are endued with true Wiſdom, and in a Degree that bears a Proportion to their Attainments therein.

In a Meaſure (I ſay) that is, proportionate to the Attainments of Religion and Virtue. For it is no wonder that when the Practice of Them is weak and uneven, has many Breaks and Interruptions in it, when 'tis as it were in its Infant-State, and not arriv'd to Maturity; the Fruits that naturally ſpring up from thence, ſhould unhappily ſhare therein. This is only a fuller Proof that they are natural Conſequences, ſince the Cauſes and the Effects bear ſo exact a Correſpondence one with the other. And if the Religious and the Virtuous have not the Reputation of Wiſdom ſo much as they really deſerve, it may be trac'd up to this in part as the Cauſe of it. It is true indeed, that it is partly owing to their ſtanding too near to the Men of Vice, and the uneaſie Reproaches that their Conduct gives to 'em; but it alſo ſprings in a great meaſure from the Weakneſs and Imperfection of the Religion and Virtue they have attain'd to. And this is the Reaſon why their Senſe of being well with God is ſo uncertain, the Peace of their own Minds ſo inconſtant, and their Character, tho' like a genuine Diamond of a true Luſtre, is not ſo clear and unblemiſh'd. If therefore we would be as wiſe and as happy as an imperfect State will allow, we muſt take care to make all the Advances we can in the Path of Religion and Virtue.

3. From

3. From what has been ſaid we may remark the ſtrange *Folly*, and Hazard of a ſinful Courſe of Life.

The Sinner is one who has not Eyes in his Head, or which is the ſame thing, makes no proper Uſe of them. He ruſhes in a thoughtleſs Manner, on what, in every reſpect, tends to his Ruin and Deſtruction. He courts the Pleaſures that will be fatal to him in the End; and rather than have the trouble of taking into his View the diſtant and future Evils threatned by him who is Truth it ſelf, to the Courſe of Life he has unhappily engag'd in, in order to eſcape them; he has recourſe to all imaginable Methods to make a Diverſion. If at any time (for the Nature of Things is obſtinate and inflexible) the evil Conſequences of his Actions force him to attend, without conſidering that the Deſign of God herein, is to bring him to his right Senſes, he, in a wild and diſtracted Way takes Sanctuary in the moſt ſtupifying Opiates of Criminal Pleaſure: And thus for a Time charms down and lays the uneaſie Reflexion of a guilty Mind, till there be ſome Occaſion or other to rouze it afreſh, and then it awakes with redoubled Force. One wou'd be inclin'd to think, that it muſt be ſomething very great and valuable, that in the Eſtimation of an intelligent Being bears down the Conſideration of having Peace with God, Serenity in the Mind, and a pleaſing Expectation of future Happineſs: A Reaſonable Nature, one wou'd imagine, ſhou'd never let go theſe real Advantages,

vantages, unleſs with a Deſign to gain ſuch as are far greater. Is it then, Sinner, that thou may'ſt in an unreſtrained Manner give in to the Gratification of Senſual Pleaſure? And will this anſwer upon a Review? Are not the Pleaſures of Senſe greater often in the Expectation, than in the Enjoyment? Are they not confin'd and narrow in the Fruition, ſhort-liv'd and of little Continuance in the Duration, and frequently attended with Uneaſineſs in the Reflection? Beſides, I wou'd appeal to thy Conſcience, Are the Pleaſures of Sin ſuch as deſerve the Name of Pleaſure? Doſt thou not find, when thou art in the Humour to think (which, God knows, is very ſeldom) that the Train of painful Paſſions that accompany the Purſuit of them, and the Diſappointment the Mind feels in the Poſſeſſion, from the too glaring Colours which deluding Fancy made uſe of to repreſent them in, are very great Abatements of the Pleaſure? and that the Thought that they are Criminal, and contrary to Reaſon and Religon, is killing? And wilt thou from ſuch a View forfeit thy true Happineſs? But probably thou haſt in thy Aim the amaſſing great and immenſe Treaſures upon Earth, and the arriving to the Grandeur and Pageantry of Life. Not to mention that a Courſe of Vice is generally an unlikely Method to gain this Deſign, will theſe Poſſeſſions give thee full Satisfaction? How long will they continue? Are they commenſurate in their Duration to thy immortal Soul? When thou feeleſt the uneaſie Girds of a Mind conſcious

ſcious of Guilt in the unjuſt and cruel Methods, that thou haſt taken to gain thy Riches; will it be in their Power to remove the Pain and Torture of the reflecting Conſcience? Will they give thee Courage to take into thy fixed View, the Conſideration of God, as a Being juſt and holy, righteous and good? Can they have Force enough to make thee look into the other World, and take a Proſpect of the unſeen State, without Dread and Horror? Or, what is leſs, can they even give thee Eaſe under the acute Pains that thy vicious Courſe of Life may have occaſion'd to thee?

Since then upon the whole there is ſo very little gain'd by any Views the Sinner can form to himſelf in a Courſe of Vice; ſince the Diſadvantages and Inconveniencies that ariſe from it, are ſo many and conſiderable, and ſo much outweigh the falſe Expectations he conceives from thence: how ſtupendous and amazing is the Folly of ſuch as are ſo obſtinately engag'd therein, as not to be moved by any Conſideration that can be offer'd to take them off! And ſhould not this Repreſentation raiſe and excite in us,

4. The ſame Deſire that is expreſſed by *Moſes* in our Text, *Oh that they were wiſe, then they would underſtand this, then they would conſider their latter End!*

If Authority has any Force, that of *Moſes* (ſuppoſe the Wiſh to be his) muſt

have a conſiderable Weight. He was fam'd by the antienteſt Sages and moſt celebrated Hiſtorians, for Skill in Laws and Wiſdom in Governing; and We apprehend him to be taught and inſtructed by God himſelf: But if we ſhould (as ſome do) conceive it to be the immediate Deſire of God, then it becomes highly obligatory upon us to imitate him, in exciting in our Mind the ſame ardent Wiſh, O *that Men were wiſe!*

But ſince ſuch Deſires, though they do expreſs Affection to ſuch as are in our Nature, do not anſwer the Intention of their being rais'd in us, nor avail much to any valuable Purpoſe, if unattended with our utmoſt Endeavours; we are to take care to add to our ardent Wiſhes, our moſt vigorous Attempts according to our Ability and Intereſt, when we are Religious and Virtuous ourſelves, to render others ſo too, by all the Methods that Prudence may direct us to take. And what can more ſtrongly influence us to a Zeal this Way, than a cool and frequent Reflection, that Religion and Virtue make *Men* and *Societies* perfect and happy, and Irreligion and Vice have a quite contrary Effect.

Suppoſe that you ſaw ſome in your Nature juſt going to take a ſtrong and inſinuating Poyſon, that would in its Operation in a latent manner, diffuſe a mortal Diſorder throughout the whole Frame, and occaſion wild and ſad Diſtraction; and upon an Apprehenſion they wou'd not be ſo

weak

weak as to do ſo great a Miſchief to themſelves, you expreſs'd no Care to prevent them; ſuppoſe that as an immediate Conſequence, They, ſeiz'd with a mad Fury, not only bid Defiance to Heaven, but ſnatch all the pointed Inſtruments of Death, and therewith ſtab themſelves in every part, and run up and down in a wild Frenzie, tearing up the Foundations of the Security and Happineſs of others: would not ſuch a Sight move your Compaſſion? Could you look on without reproaching your ſelves, that you did not do what was in your Power to reſtrain them from ſo miſchievous an Attempt? Will not the Reflection upon that Neglect, occaſion you to expreſs a greater Diligence in the uſe of all the Means, that are proper to recover ſuch to their right Mind? Shall not a Regard at leaſt to your own Happineſs, which is attack'd by ſuch, ſtrongly influence this Way?

But imagine farther, that thoſe who are thus diſtracted, ſpread a Contagion, and infect all around them, that hereby the Danger becomes general, and there are ſad Preſages of approaching Ruin; ſhould we think it enough to offer up only faint Wiſhes, *Oh that they were wiſe?* No ſurely. A Zeal the moſt warm and active, would in all Probability enſue on this Occaſion. And when the Agreement between this Alluſion, and the unhappy Effects that ariſe from Irreligion and Vice to Perſons and Communities, is ſo great as to ſuperſede the Neceſſity of making a particular Application of it; ſhall

we not feel a Zeal excited in our Minds in this Caſe, as warm and active as in the other?

It is certain the Diſcouragements that lie in the Way are many and great, or at leaſt repreſented to be ſuch. Human Nature by Sin is ſadly degenerate and corrupt. The Temptations to Vice are various. The Number of the Vicious is conſiderable, and they are in a Confederacy one with another, and with the Powers of Darkneſs, who are potent, ſubtle and vigilant Enemies to the Happineſs of Mankind. The Oppoſition then that you muſt expect to meet with in this Affair will be great and conſtant. And the fear of the Hazard that any may run in this Attempt will not fail of repreſenting it in the moſt diſcouraging and frightful Views that it can poſſibly be ſet in.

To abate then the Force of ſuch Repreſentations, conſider that tho' human Nature is depraved, God however does preſerve and maintain in it ſuch Principles as aſſiſt towards its Recovery; and notwithſtanding the Temptations to Vice are many, yet the Conſequences that attend the Practice are ſo evil, and the Inſtances of them are ſo numerous, and lie ſo open to view that the Attempt of Reforming muſt meet with ſomething in Experience to promote the Succeſs of it. And whereas Sinners are ſuppos'd to be in a Confederacy, ſuch is the Contrariety that there is between one Vice and another, that we have no reaſon to entertain formidable Apprehenſions of a Com-

Combination which in the Nature of the Thing cannot be firm and ſtrong. It is true, the Powers of Darkneſs might make us tremble, but that they are conquer'd Foes, and are under the Check and Reſtraint of our kind Governour.

Having weaken'd the Strength of the Diſcouragements, that might damp your Reſolution to uſe all the Power and Intereſt you have in the World, to ſuppreſs Vice and promote Virtue; I ſhall now ſet before you with Pleaſure the mighty Encouragements you have to purſue with Vigour and Conſtancy this Deſign, which is ſo beneficial to Mankind in every Capacity.

The Perſonal Virtues of our Rightful Sovereign King *GEORGE*, which are too great and bright for my weak Colours to ſet in a proper and a juſt view, as well as the conſummate Skill of Governing, which Envy it ſelf is forc'd to allow to his Majeſty, give you the fulleſt Aſſurance that He will favour a Deſign that is calculated for the Happineſs of Mankind, eſpecially ſince this is the Aim, to which all the Acts of the Auſpicious Government He has exerciſed over us, have been conſtantly levell'd.

You may entertain in your Minds a ſettled Perſuaſion, that the prime Miniſters of State, and the Patriots of your Country, are embark'd in this Cauſe. The Character of a good Stateſman is to know clearly, what makes the Body Politique ſtrong and flouriſhing, and what ſecures it from any evil Impreſſion, that foreign Power may be capable

pable of giving it, and to purſue ſteadily ſuch Meaſures. And the Term *Patriot* carries in it a ſteady, conſtant and unſhaken Love and Affection that a Perſon bears to his Native Country. Now the Influence Virtue and Vice have upon the Happineſs and Miſery of the Publique is too eaſily diſcern'd, to eſcape the Notice of ſuch, as, by holding the firſt Rank in Life, are inur'd to debate upon Matters of the laſt Conſequence. To ſuppoſe then that they have a clear View of this, and yet are in the Intereſt of Vice, is to imagine, that they lay claim (without any juſt Reaſon) to the bright Character of good Stateſmen and honeſt Patriots, which is too great a Reflection upon them to be entertain'd and admitted. You muſt therefore conceive that They are paſs'd over into your Quarters.

The *Clergy*, unleſs you can apprehend that they have forgot even the Deſign of their Office, which is by their Inſtructions, and Example, to reclaim Sinners, and confirm the Virtuous in the Path of Religion which leads to Happineſs, muſt be regarded as taking your Side, and as ſtrenuous Abettors of the Cauſe you are engag'd in. In a word, all Men that are wiſe and conſiderate will be Patrons of it.

But what remains behind carries in it the ſtrongeſt Encouragement. *God*, who has in himſelf every Perfection in kind and degree, who is Pure and Holy, falls in with this Deſign, and promotes it by the Courſe of his Government and the Excellency of his

Laws;

Laws; and ſhall not this animate us? when hereby we have the Honour of being His Miniſters, and ſubſervient to His good Providence over Men.

And let not any unjuſt Contempt, the Character of a Reformer may fall under, diſpirit you in the purſuit of a Deſign ſo truly good in it ſelf, and ſo really beneficial to others.

The WORD, by whom the Father made all Things, and by whom he directs and governs them, in the Fulneſs of Time took upon him our Nature, and condeſcended to converſe on Earth in order to reclaim and *recover* us to true Religion and Virtue: When we therefore carry on this Deſign, we have in our View the ſame Intention that he had when he appear'd here below.

And if the Intereſt of Religion and Virtue expoſes us to any Danger, let us conſider that our Lord was a *Martyr* in the Cauſe, and is now advanced to all Dignity and Power, and will reward his conſtant and reſolute Servants with ſuch a Recompence, as will infinitely over-ballance the Difficulties that did attend their promoting his Intereſt.

If to do good then to thoſe (to bring this Diſcourſe to a concluſion) who are in our own Nature in all the poſſible Ways of their becoming happy in this, and in the other Life, carries any Force in it; if the Conſideration of the Agreeableneſs of the Cauſe I am recommending to you, to the Deſign of God, and Chriſt, and Angels, and all

all ſober and conſiderate Men, implies any Strength of Argument; if the Pleaſure you find now in the carrying on ſo valuable an Intereſt, and the Happineſs you expect hereafter as a Reward, have any weight, ſhew your ſelves Men, go on with Courage and Reſolution: And God of his infinite Mercy crown your prudent Endeavours with remarkable Succeſs. *Amen.*

FINIS.